2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

summer or the work of burning *dahi*, saying, 'O the summer has brought this burning for me'. They eat onions as a cure. 757

For pain in the stomach. The root of the arandi shrub, or the small green shoots of the bahera tree. 755

For wounds. The bark of the mendla tree. 278

For rheumatism. There are several different remedies:

(1) Put some leaves of the kumi tree on the affected place and blow the pain away.

(2) Powder the roots of the karanji and sarpho plants. Mix with oil and rub it in.

(3) Touch the painful swelling with a bit of 'seed-iron' (*bij-loha*), or a thunderbolt.

For fever. The classic treatment is with red ants, which are sprinkled over the patient's body—the stings act as a counter-irritant. Sometimes, however, the ants are put in a pot of water, the lid is closed and the water is boiled for an hour. Then it is strained out and salt, chilli and garlic are mixed in it and it is given to the patient to drink. The residue of red ants is cleaned, ground up with salt and chilli and made into a chutney and given to the patient with his first food.

Another common febrifuge is to pound the leaves of the chill tree, and make a drink by mixing them with salt and chilli in water.

Red ants are also given as a cure for biliousness. A chutney of red ants, haldi and chilli is said to act very quickly on the stomach.

For headache.

(1) Pull each of your toes in turn. When you have found the toe that is connected with whatever part of the head is aching, tie it up and the pain will cease.

(2) Grind up the roots of makar and tikur with fresh haldi. Make a hot poultice of this and apply it to the head.

For diarrhoea. Take seven grains of rice and seven grains of urad pulse and the dry leaf of any old bamboo in the house. Grind them up together, boil in water, strain and take on an empty stomach.

For itch. Make an ointment of the white underskin of a snake and karanji oil.

For sores.

(1) Collect some harra fruit (myrabolams), dry and grind them to powder. Make a paste with a little oil, and apply to the sores.

(2) Remove the dirt from the patient's own ears, mix it in a paste of rice-flour and apply to the sores.

For the bite of a mad dog. Get a bit of the flesh of a mad dog which has died, dry it carefully and store it. When needed, it may be given mixed with gur not less than two years old.

Several different kinds of medicinal oil are made by the Muria. For cracked feet, and wounds in the ears of a bullock, they extract oil from the *dhaman* snake or the cobra. The fat is removed and melted in a pot and kept carefully in a small gourd. For rheumatism, oil made from the fatty parts of the tiger, the leopard or the bear is said to be effective.

X. Muria Festivals

Muria festivals are of several different kinds. The great Marhai are commercial festivals; in the larger Hinduized villages the old Pen Karaita or 'Sport of the Gods' has been turned into a large bazaar, at which the religious element 527

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

● 527 is present but not obtruded. The Kondagaon Marhai lasts four or five days, but only on one of these is there any serious spiritual business. Then clan-gods from the surrounding villages attend, scores of Siraha fall into ecstasy, and a great procession goes round the booths of the fair. In the Muria country, similar Marhai are held in Keskal, Narayanpur and Antagarh.

[411]

FIG. 31. Axes of a type used to kill sacrificial animals

Dassera is a national festival. If the Marhai corresponds to St Giles Fair or the Lord Mayor's Procession, Dassera is for the people of Bastar the King's Birthday, the Aldershot Tattoo and Primrose Day combined. Pargana headmen from all over the State assemble at Jagdalpur to pay tribute to the Maharaja and attend the Muria Darbar. The ceremonies last a fortnight and the aboriginals play a major part in them; among other things they kidnap the Maharaja and have the right to pull his ceremonial car. Central in the Dassera ritual is the royal worship of Danteshwari: her priest and litter come all the way from Dantewara; and no Muria who sees the regal attention the goddess receives at Jagdalpur but wants to introduce her to a shrine in his own village.

The great Jatra may be classified as tribal festivals. These are the religious pilgrimages to the shrines of the clan-gods and to notable gods in celebrated temples. They are sometimes celebrated annually and sometimes every three years. They are very great and exciting occasions; gods are brought by their devotees from surrounding villages; hundreds of chelik and motiari come to dance; and scores of Siraha enliven the scene by their antics. In villages where there is no clan-god, there is usually a small Deo-jatra, an assembly of the villagers to do honour to the local gods. These are brought out of their shrines, bathed, exercised and worshipped. Such ceremonies often occur shortly before the Wijja Pandum in April or May.

796 I have already given an outline of the agricultural festivals which, with the festivals of the clan-gods, are the most important events of the year. All these festivals are of the same pattern; at one the first pulses are eaten; at another the freshly reaped millets; at a third mangoes and other fruits. It will be sufficient, therefore, to describe in detail one of these celebrations, and I will now give an account of the Marka Pandum, or the ceremonial eating of the first mangoes of the year, which I saw at Masora on 17 April 1941. This feast is preceded by a ceremonial hunt. I missed this at Masora, arriving only in time to see the chelik return with a fine hare slung over a boy's shoulder.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER NINETEEN

GHOTUL EXPEDITIONS

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X 883
X 484
527
796

DELIGHTFUL and enlivening features of ghotul life are the expeditions which are made throughout the year to other villages.[1] I will consider here only those visits which are made by the ghotul officially, under the command of the leaders and with appropriate discipline and rules. Such expeditions are made for marriages, for the festivals of the clan-gods and the Marhai fairs, and—in the cold weather—for ceremonial dancing from village to village. Sometimes the chelik and motiari go together, sometimes separately. Although every trip has a definite and serious purpose it is transformed by the spirit of youth and love into a holiday adventure. Now girls and boys of different villages meet one another and fall in love; now chelik and motiari can go out together on the freest and happiest of picnics far away from the drudgery of everyday life.

Every marriage attracts the neighbouring ghotul; early in the morning of the marriage day the chelik and motiari of a dozen villages are up, decorating themselves, preparing their drums, collecting their few necessities. When they reach their destination, they camp under trees or by a stream. They go to the wedding to help in the making of the booth, to dance before the house and above all to share in the splendid display of the Lagir. They are entertained by the bridegroom's family; they get their food and some liquor. For the rest they roam about together, playing, laughing, flirting or talking and resting in their little outdoor camps. Marriages usually occur in the warm weather and provide a perfect picnic-holiday for everyone.

The great festivals of the clan-gods provide another opportunity for amorous adventure or recreation. The Muria mind does not confuse piety with religion. The gods are to be satisfied and honoured; they must be bathed, fed, humoured, coaxed, caressed; but there is no reason why their worshippers should not enjoy themselves. The Canterbury Pilgrims would have been quite at home at a clan-festival. I have witnessed these at Adnar and Metawand. Hundreds of boys and girls attend them—a magnificent sight with their finery and ornaments. Here again, each ghotul makes a separate camp under trees, but the chelik and motiari dance together and there is more mixing with other villages than in a marriage.

Many a boy arrives with a bottle of mahua liquor half hidden beneath his arm. He has come with a definite purpose of meeting and attracting a girl from another village. At night he may be seen with a torch searching everywhere for his sweetheart. Even married men are allowed licence on these occasions. The gods themselves, carried about by mediumistic Siraha, assault the girls and chase them about. The festal dancing begins about nine o'clock in the evening and goes on till dawn; it is a splendid and moving spectacle. All round are little camp fires, and as the night wears on more and more boys and girls slip away together into the jungle or retire to sit by the fire and drink their liquor.

X 883
X 484
796

There are finally the ceremonial expeditions, which we will now consider.

[1] Similar expeditions are made by the Orissa tribes, the Bhuiya, Juang, Bondo and Gadaba, though these generally have a serious matrimonial purpose alien to Muria tradition.